Letter Lauds Berrigan Witness' Character

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HARRISBURG, Pa, March 16 — The government presented a letter of commendation from a department store manager in court today as evidence of the "sterling character" of Boyd F. Douglas Jr, the chief witness against seven antiwar activists on trial here.

The letter was intended to counter defense attorneys' attempts, during cross-examintion, to portray Douglas as a "provacateur" who entrapped the defendants.

A 1967 FBI document that said Douglas "has many of the attributes of a confidence man" was the final defense attack against Douglas in seven days of cross-examination.

Douglas kept the FBI informed about the defendants' activities in 1970, when both he and the Rev. Philip Berrigan, a defendant, were inmates at Lewisbug, Pa., Federal Penitentiary. The government has said that its case is built on information from Douglas, who was then serving a prison term for forgery, interstate transportation of stolen securities and assault of an FBI agent.

The defendants are charged with conspiracy to kidnap presidential adviser Henry A. Kissinger, to bomb tunnels under federal buildings in Washington and to raid federal offices.

In one hour of re-direct examination by the prosecution this morning, Douglas said that since April, 1971, he has been working full time as a salesman in the men's clothing department of a large department store in Des Moines.

Chief prosecutor William S. Lynch, who was prevented from reading the letter aloud, said he wanted to show through the letter from Douglas' boss "the sterling character of Mr. Douglas . . ." Lynch later referred to Douglas as "hard-working, dependable."

Lynch asked Douglas if he had "a corrupt economic motive" or "extortionist's intent" when he started making copies of letters he smuggled in and out of Lewisburg Penitentiary for Father Berrigan and Sister Elizabeth McAlister, another defendant. Douglas answered, "I did not."

The defense has said inmates will testify that Douglas told them he copied the letters and gave them to the FBI in an attempt to extort Father Berrigan and the donors of the Catholic Left.

The prosecution called eight additional witnesses today. Seven of them were FBI agents, U.S. marshals and policemen who described the aftermath of raids on Selective Service offices in June, 1970, in Delaware. The raids form part of the basis for conspiracy charges against the defendants. Sister McAlister described the raids in one of the letters she sent to Father Berrigan.

Testimony today did not link any of the defendants to the Delaware raids, in which two persons were arrested. The charges were dropped later, and a third person, who is not a defendant here, was indicted.

William D. Stephey of the Wilmington, Del., police department's bomb squad told the jury that on the morning of June 19, 1970, he rushed to the Customs House in Wilmington to inspect an object that fell from the arms of one of the two persons arrested for the raids.

The object, he said, turned out to be a "common flashlight."